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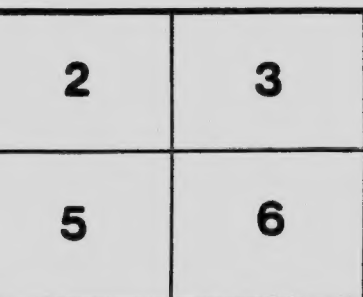
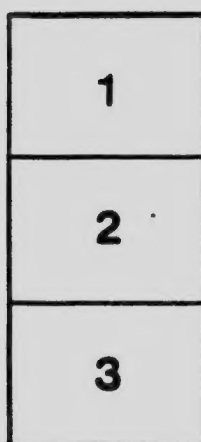
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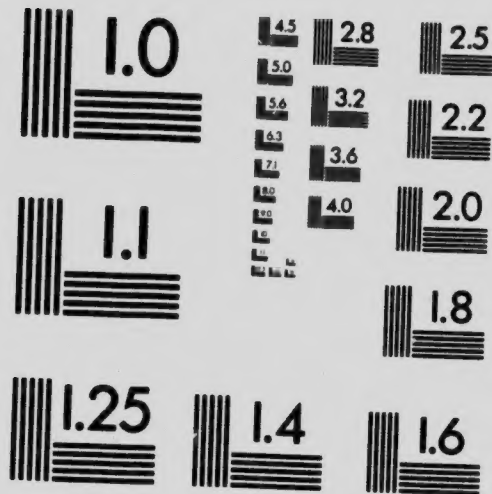
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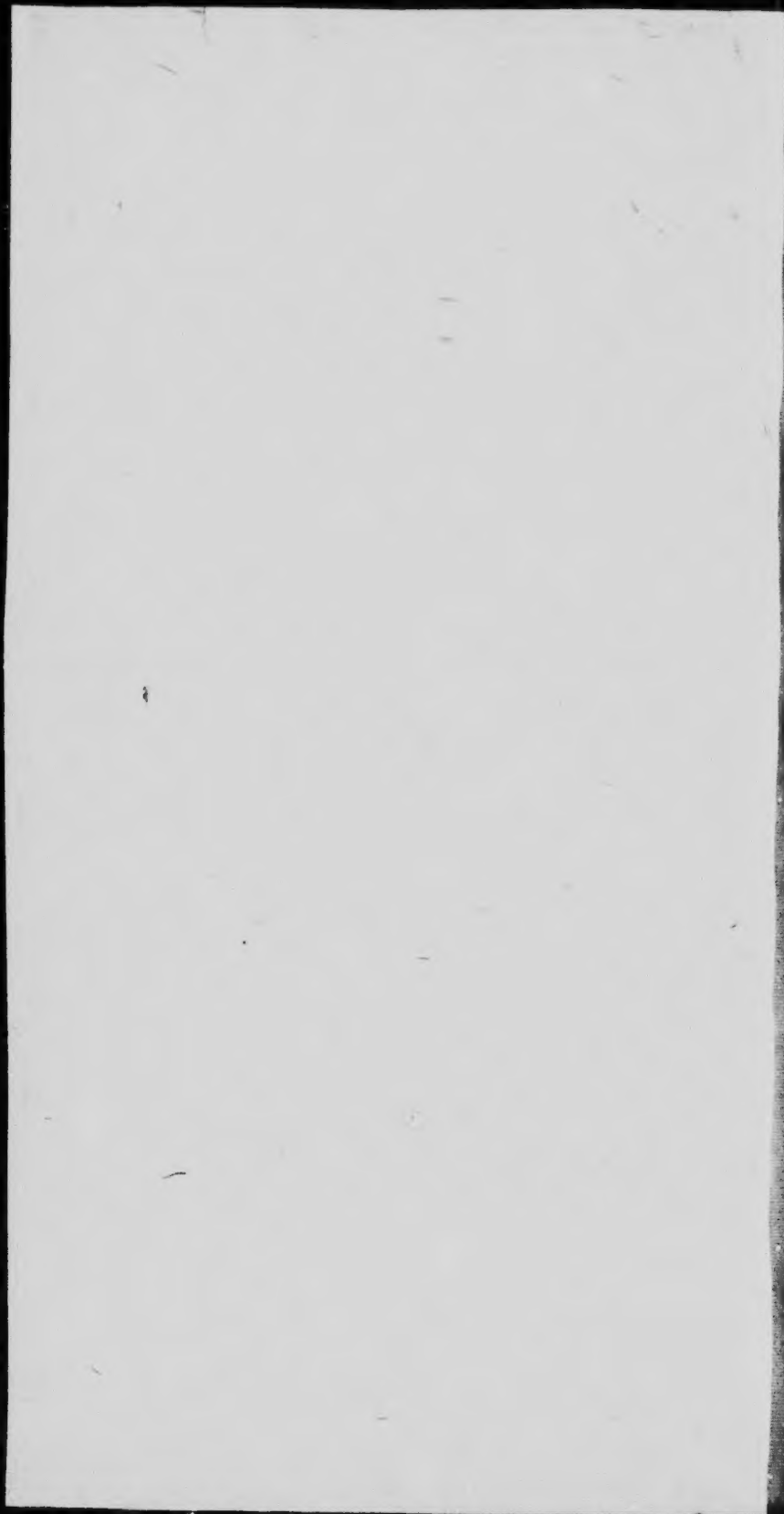
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Equality OF Opportunity

BY
James E. Dobbs



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Equality of Opportunity

The man who first thought of the brotherhood of man was the world's first democrat. He it was who first conceived that the human race should not be permanently divided up, through the machinations of a few autocrats, into warring classes for religious domination or material gain. But selfish men, through a desire for insensate power, appropriated to themselves, in the earlier centuries, the right of absolute proprietorship over many of their less fortunate fellows. Later they relinquished, through compulsion, the more crude and brutal form of absolute authority, as the organized state, with its measure of democratic control, came into being. But, notwithstanding our boasted advance towards a better civilization, is there not a very close resemblance, in essence at least, between the more ancient forms of slavery and those actually experienced by the world's workers by hand and brain to-day? We believed that the days of barter in human flesh and blood were gone, but what must we say to-day of the wholesale transfer of millions of people from one country to another as the result of war treaties? Or take the common, everyday, continuous, sordid and de-

vastating economic struggle between those who produce and those who do not; between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in human society. Such an everlasting industrial feud creates inordinate wealth on one side and abject poverty on the other, while those in between are kept in constant fear and anxiety, seeking to procure and maintain the ordinary comforts of life. In proof of this, reliable statistics show that the private wealth of the British Isles in the year 1914 was distributed as follows:

Rich (Upper Class), comprising 2 per cent. of the population, held 64 per cent. of the wealth.

Comfortable (Middle Class), comprising 10 per cent. of the population, held 24 per cent. of the wealth.

Poor (Working Class), comprising 88 per cent. of the population, held 12 per cent. of the wealth.

These figures are a conservative estimate and since the war the distribution of wealth has become still more unequal—that is, the rich have become richer and the poor poorer. Statistics of the United States show that the distribution of wealth there, approximates the same ratio.

Capitalism, ruthless and autocratic, intoxicated with brute, insensate power, pervades the whole political fabric of the world to-day. If we ever had any doubt of this, surely the revelations of this after-

war period should convince us. Whatever view we may hold concerning the cause of the late world cataclysm—and many know where to place the blame in this capitalistic world—we did, at least, hope that the results of the Peace Conference would have produced greater unity and better understanding among all peoples, flowering at last into a real League of Nations for the protection and advancement of humanity. Our hopes, so far as officialdom is concerned, have turned to ashes at our feet. Imperialistic individuals who undertook to guide us out of the welter, wilfully deceived us, but, unsuspected by dull officialdom, these dead hopes of ours will generate new, virile hopes, void of the blind and foolish trustfulness of the past. We will build, instead of Capitalism, a world federation of brotherhood, the basis of which will be a social democracy. In this new world already coming into being, the autocratic groups of the past will be discarded as mere impediments to progress, and new groups, sensitive and responsive to the desires of the people, will be chosen to express their democratic wishes. We have made a start in Ontario with the election of a U. F. O.-Labor Government.

The greatest need of the hour is a broader, more democratic and human education for the masses, something vital and stimulating that will enable them to rise above conformity, usage, precedent and

custom and set their minds on the lone star of a humanitarian ideal. Mr. Leonard S. Woolf, writing on this point, says: "Man in the herd is very like a sheep in the flock, for he has a fatal instinct to fix his mind's eye upon the back of the last thought in the mind of his neighbor and then to follow him blindly along the path of political and social development. Hence the danger of these vicious circles in which whole nations of men and women tramp desperately round and round upon a track formed of their own follies, cruelties and miseries. The sheep could save itself from destruction if for one moment it could wrest its eyes from the tail of the sheep which it is following blindly. The same is true of man. The only way to break a vicious circle of this kind is for men to tear their thoughts away from the prejudices which they are blindly following and to fix them upon some star or some ideal outside and above the muddy and bloody paths which they call civilization." The supreme function of the Labor Party of this country is to do exactly that, namely, by propaganda literature and by public speaking to help men, "tear their thoughts away from prejudices which they are blindly following and to fix them upon some ideal outside and above the muddy and bloody paths which they call civilization." Such an ideal is a Social Democracy, with a working knowledge of how to attain it. If anyone should doubt the

necessity of having such an ideal, let him contemplate the debacle of the late world war and ask himself if a civilization which produces a great world war and leaves millions of helpless men, women and little children starving in its trail, while the victors consolidate their material gains, is not utterly vicious and needs to be radically transformed.

Modern industrialism is another vicious circle. Industry to-day is making little honorable contribution to society at large. Its supreme function is wealth production, which means exploitation of about eighty per cent. of the population. Instead of being a scientific instrument for the welfare of society, industry is made to serve the grossly selfish and materialistic instincts of a small minority. The dice is loaded for the benefit of a few; the many always lose. Mr. Woolf says further: "Owing to the system and organization which we have developed, only two motives for production are operative in society. One is the making of profit and the other the earning of a wage. The original motive, which sets in motion every industrial enterprise, is not the supply of things to the community which the community requires to consume, but the making of profit for a small minority. . . . This converts industry into a struggle between two groups, one composed of the wage-earners and the other of profit-takers, each contending in order to get the

most it can, whether in profits or wages. Our minds have become so hard-set in this vicious circle of beliefs and desires that a man who really regards the object of industry and commerce as something other than individual profit is stamped at once as an absurd visionary. Meantime humanity trudges round and round its vicious circle; the true objects of producing food, clothing, houses and furniture (for use instead of for profit) are forgotten or obscured; and even Labor can hardly believe that the end of toil can be anything but the "earning" of profit, interest, salary or wages. . . . If we were really civilized, we could not possibly fail to see that the only desirable object in producing and distributing commodities is consumption. . . . No industrial production should be tolerated in a community, which has any belief in the dignity or hope of the future of man, except such as supplies the wants of the community."

This idea suggests properly and logically the need for a Social Democracy, which is worthy of the highest hopes and keenest struggles of all who labor. The Social Democracy is still, in the year 1920, a vision, but, like nearly all visions, it will be attainable whenever we, in sufficient numbers, see and desire it. In the meantime the workers seek to back up their policy of industrial, social and economic reform by the creation of a political

ages. party, known in Ontario as the Independent Labor Party. It eliminates all narrow spirit of class, since it seeks to represent all who labor by hand or brain. Labor believes that such a political party, representing the interests of the consuming public, is necessary in order to transform the present competitive economic system into a co-operative system. The final aim of political action by the workers is to substitute the prevailing method of private enterprise for individual profit by a system of social production for collective use. In other words, it is intended to bring into complete realization that plank in the platform of the Independent Labor Party which demands "Equality of opportunity, for men and women, politically, socially and industrially."

Because the Labor Party advocates this transformation in our political, social and industrial system, it is bound to be maligned by those who benefit by the present régime and misunderstood by the conservative-minded. But that does not matter. Only a weak policy does not create any opposition.

Nothing short of a Social Democracy, where goods shall be made for use instead of for profit, where everything that is publicly used shall be publicly owned, where everything that is privately used shall be privately owned; where there will be equal opportunity for all and special privileges for none; nothing short of this

will satisfy humanity, so far as material requirements are concerned. That achieved, the potential powers of humanity will be released for the greater and higher development of the human race.

Yesterday, both wings of humanity were bound. Those were the days of Feudalism. To-day, one wing is free and used a little. These are the days of Capitalism. To-morrow, both wings will be free and the realization of the aspirations of humanity will at last be possible. Then will be the day of Social Democracy.

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